



**Testimony Regarding School Construction Funds for Charter Schools  
& Support for HB 5283 and SB 229  
March 4, 2022**

**Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez and distinguished members of the Education Committee:**

My name is Ronelle and I'm from Bridgeport. I am the Director & CEO of New Beginnings Family Academy. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I want to address the long standing inequities in our state's public education system and voice my support for SB 229: An Act Concerning the Charter School Approval Process and HB 5283: An Act Concerning the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula and the Funding of Other Education Programs.

For years we have been told that there is not enough money to go around. As I am before you today, that is no longer true. And yet, in spite of Connecticut's surplus of \$2.5 billion dollars our state is still not properly addressing the disparities in our education system. The influx of federal aid is not enough. We must ensure that our state makes the choice to financially support and fully fund all public schools.

This coming September, NBFA will celebrate its 20th year serving Bridgeport kids. I have been with the school for 18 of those years. In all of that time, even in light of our successes, we are still here every year begging for equity!

Much of the federal funding we have received has been applied toward the salaries of professionals needed to address student learning loss, including certified reading and math specialists and an assistant principal for our lower grades. There is so much more we want to do for our students but we do not receive equitable resources to do so.

We must fully fund ALL public schools, including New Beginnings Family Academy and the 20 other Connecticut public charter schools. Our students deserve a student-centered, need-based funding system that fully funds all students regardless of their race, class, zip code, or type of school they attend.

I am also asking you to ensure public charter schools have access to facilities funding. Currently, NBFA's 7th and 8th grade students are housed in four tight classrooms in a tiny



annex building that used to be a consignment shop. That is not fair. Operating safe school buildings is a necessity especially while our state continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet we are not supported to do so because charter schools do not receive facilities funding from the state. As a result, we are forced to use money that should go toward instruction and programming for facilities instead. This must be changed.

Additionally, I ask this committee to take seriously the matter of amending how public charter schools can open in our state. We should go back to the way public charter schools were opened before 2015. For far too long, many of Connecticut's highest-need school districts have been underfunded resulting in less services and opportunities for students. With the current charter law, we are perpetuating this problem. While recent legislative changes to how Connecticut funds education are helping, bold action is needed to truly provide our state's students with the education they deserve.

In closing, it is my hope that you will champion the following much-needed changes that will help achieve equity for public charter school students this legislative session. We need to fully fund ALL students and schools now, and finally provide school districts and communities across the state with the resources they need.

I want to thank this committee for the work you have done to support Connecticut students. I must insist you go farther. Please continue to stand with our children by passing a student centered formula that funds students based on their individual, educational needs and increased access to facilities funds for charter schools. Support all our students, regardless of which public school they attend.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and leadership on this issue.

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